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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SOURCE

The War Ministry Directive 0085 entitled "Undivided Authority and Responsibilities of Military Commanders in the Army" (O ukrepleni Rol'i Komandira i yego Vedinonachaliya v Chasti), was issued sometime in August 1951. The original directive, as far as I know, was sent to GCPG Headquarters in Potsdam only. Several days after this directive was received a briefing was held in GCPG Hqs, attended by all army, corps, and divisional commanders and their deputies for political matters. All participants were given strict orders to comply with the spirit and wording of the directive and to insure its enforcement in all subordinate units. Afterwards, divisional commanders had briefings in their headquarters for all subordinate commanders, their chiefs of staff, and political officers.

2. The directive dealt with three main problems:
 - (a) Undivided authority of commanders;
 - (b) Strict compliance with provisions of manuals and army regulations;
 - (c) Morale and enforcement of military discipline.

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3. I can make the following analysis of the directives. Concerning the first problem the War Minister pointed out that even at this time, six years after the end of the war, the authority of military commanders could not be sufficiently enforced within the units under their command because a majority of political officers did not have a clear understanding of their position, authority and responsibility within army units to which they are assigned. The rights of the commanders were constantly curtailed, their authority was encroached upon and they were in no way the real bosses of their units. Political officers quite frequently assumed authority over the military commander and thus discredited his position. In some cases political officers had even changed or voided direct orders issued by the military commander. The actions and the official attitude of the commander was often subjected to unrestrained criticism at party meetings and conferences. Various party functionaries had introduced the practice of summoning military commanders to report on their military activity to party commissions, a policy which undermined the authority of the commanders. Some other authorities, and especially the Judge Advocate's Office and the Counter-Intelligence Service, at times bypassed military commanders and carried on investigations and made arrests in military units without notifying the commanders. On several occasions these authorities had visited military units at night, made arrests, taken persons away, and commanders had not known anything until the next day. As a rule the commander and his deputy for political matters were not on friendly terms. They had different opinions and could not even find the common ground necessary for the smooth coordination of their activities. Such a situation was not only detrimental to the authority of the commanders over their subordinates, but also very bad for the morale, discipline, and combat readiness of the line units.
4. The War Minister's directive severely reprimanded political officers in the army for their arrogance and in order to alleviate the situation prohibited political deputies from usurping the authority of commanders. Their only field from that time on must be the political enlightenment and indoctrination of personnel. Any criticism of the official actions of military commanders at party meetings, conferences and sessions was qualified as incompatible with the basic army organizational principles and highly detrimental to the commander's authority. In the future violators of this regulation would be subject to court-martial. The MGB, the Judge Advocate's Office, and Counter-Intelligence Service personnel were strictly forbidden to interfere with internal army life. All problems affecting army personnel, as far as the responsibility of these agencies was concerned had to be handled in agreement with the respective military commanders. Interrogations, arrests, and removal of military personnel from their units are subject to the authorization of respective military commanders.
5. Concerning the second problem the directive stated that in numerous cases military commanders had failed to enforce strict compliance with existing regulations, manuals, and training schedules in their units. The daily instruction schedules and programs were not observed, training was lagging, and

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- soldiers were often allowed to hang around loafing. A large number of personnel was excused from training under pretext of being busy with some administrative or supply work. All these people were spending considerable time outside of barracks area visiting German communities, mixing with Germans, getting drunk, bringing liquor to barracks, causing disorders, raping women, and falling victims to enemy espionage. Military commanders failed to insure strict supervision over their personnel and to account for those absent, thus jeopardizing the combat readiness of their units. Violation of the provisions of army manuals and regulations had become a daily routine in the army. The responsibility for these conditions usually fell on officers, who did not show sufficient interest in their work to become familiar with army regulations, and, consequently, were not in position to request their subordinates to comply with these regulations nor to enforce them.
6. To correct this situation the directive instructed military commanders to take immediate steps to insure in their units a strict compliance with manuals, regulations, training and instruction schedules. All officers were to become familiar with regulations and to enforce them in a strict way. The study of army manuals was to be made a component part of the officer training program. Every month unit commanders were to examine their officers on their familiarization with manuals and to send efficiency reports on the individual officers to the next higher unit. Divisional commanders were directed to give training assignments as home tasks to each battalion and regimental commander. All commanders were to insure strict supervision of personnel and to see to it that nobody was excused from training. Administrative work was to be cut to a minimum and performed outside of the training period. In the future no sergeants or privates are to be sent on TDY without an officer escort. Practical training and instruction, as far as possible, was to be conducted in the immediate vicinity of barracks or summer camp areas in order to insure better supervision of personnel. The army training and instruction plan was to be considered a part of the USSR state plan, the 100% fulfillment of which is an immediate responsibility of military commanders.
 7. The morale of the troops, the directive stated, was exceedingly low and discipline was lax. Statistics showed that disciplinary violations were constantly increasing. The same applied to court-martial proceedings, and there were more and more VD cases in the army. Provisions set forth in the Occupational Regime, Soviet Army in Germany, were not complied with. There was an ever growing number of cases involving fraternization of military personnel with Germans, drunkenness, and visiting of German amusement places. In punishing offenders officers very often did not comply with the provisions of the disciplinary manuals nor did they analyze all circumstances under which the violations had been committed. Unit commanders and political officers very often neglected completely the moral instruction and enlightenment of their subordinates and contented themselves with the solution of administrative problems and paper work. On the other hand there were many cases in which unit commanders abused their power, while at the same time, NCOs very seldom made use of their disciplinary authority and failed to take the proper attitude as immediate superiors and instructors to soldiers.

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8. Commanders were instructed to abstain from excessive use of their authority and to cut down the percentage of disciplinary punishments in their units. Instead, the emphasis was to be placed on a program of moral education and enlightenment of enlisted men. Every case of discipline violation in the unit was to be studied and properly analyzed and must no longer be allowed to degenerate into a routine of arbitrary imposition of punishment. Commanders were to encourage their NCOs to make use of the disciplinary authority vested in them and to become real instructors of soldiers. Every unit was to keep a register of disciplinary punishments and commendations. Disciplinary punishments which had been imposed were to be given wide publicity in the unit and accompanied by adequate comments pointing to their moral-educational purpose. Annulled disciplinary punishments were to be considered as commendations and entered into individual records. The percentage of disciplinary punishments in a unit was to be taken as an index of moral conditions within the unit and the degree of enlightenment achieved. The main task of all inspecting authorities was to ascertain the actual morale of the unit and to draw the necessary conclusions. Regardless of all achievements in other disciplines and training, no satisfactory efficiency rating will be granted to a unit in which morale is low.
9. Directive 0085, especially its first part, was accepted by military commanders with enthusiasm. For once, it was officially stated, in clear and definite language, that military commanders had "undivided" authority in their units. The Minister of War had clearly defined the position and responsibilities of political officers, putting them into their proper place in the army and had limited their task to political enlightenment and moral indoctrination. Political officers were henceforth forbidden to interfere with the commanders' orders and they could no longer boast that their positions were equal to those of military commanders and that they shared with the commanders the control over their units.
10. The publication of directive 0085 was followed by a period of feverish activity on the part of all army superiors. Overnight, political officers became gravely concerned with the morale of the troops and their discipline. There was an invasion of visiting "political firemen" in all army units who checked disciplinary records and advised commanders to reconsider disciplinary punishments imposed during the training period and to annul all those which could be annulled. The fall inspection of GOFG was approaching and the disciplinary conditions in the 57th Guards Rifle Division were such that political officers feared it would receive a negative efficiency rating.
11. On the military side, directive 0085 produced a series of bulletins, orders and instructions from GOFG and Army Hqs which prescribed tightening disciplinary regulations, supervision and control of personnel, prohibition of selling alcoholic beverages to army personnel in Voyentorgs and German stores, discontinuation of the policy of serving liquor in officers' messes and clubs. Fraternization was once more strictly forbidden and any kind of private connections with Germans qualified as serious breaches of the occupational regime. Divisional and army commanders

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- dispatched their staff officers to subordinate units to ascertain the degree of combat readiness, the fulfillment of training programs, and compliance with instruction plans and schedules. Officers were forced to study army manuals. Monthly examinations of officers by commanders were introduced immediately, and this policy was strictly enforced. This innovation affected especially political officers at all levels since until that time they had not taken the trouble to study army manuals and were the first to violate army regulations.
12. In May 1950 when the new policy of appointing deputy commanders-political at company level was introduced, could be interpreted at first glance as a restriction on the rights and responsibilities of military commanders. Such an interpretation in the light of directive 0085, would be completely erroneous. Until May 1950 commanders of company size units were overloaded with work. In addition to all their normal functions they were responsible for the moral education of the personnel and could not devote their entire time to training and combat readiness of their units. In order to correct this situation and to relieve commanders of their excessive burden deputy commanders-political, were appointed in company size units.
13. Such deputy commanders-political were usually chosen from former line unit platoon commanders who volunteered for political service in the army. After an indoctrination course of six months, given in Potsdam under the auspices of GOFG, these young officers received positions of deputy commanders-political in company and battalion size units. As former line officers, they had a good understanding of their position and did not interfere much with the work of military commanders in fields of military training and discipline. But eventually, under the influence of their political superiors from battalion and regiment, they went astray and assumed a much more independent position. They believed themselves equal or even superior to their commanders. At that time it was usual that the battalion political officer would call a conference at least once a week of company political officers to give them instruction in their work. Very often this work had nothing to do with normal tasks of political officers and was a pure infringement on the rights of military commanders. He would instruct company political officers to watch closely the movements of officers, their actions, and habits, and to report everything directly to him. Emphasizing that company political officers were subordinate solely to him - an entirely wrong interpretation, since company political officers are directly subordinate to company commanders, - battalion political officers created among these young officers the impression that they were real commanders, quite independent from the military commander.
14. Among the motives which prompted the publication of directive 0085 in August 1951 were the excessive powers acquired during the postwar years by the political officers in the army and the tension created between the company commanders and their deputy-political officers. This situation had seriously affected both the authority of military commanders and the combat readiness of their troops. The new directive has clearly put political officers in their place by a clear definition of their actual responsibilities.

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